

CLAIMS AFTER PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

1. A system for eliminating unauthorized email sent to a user on a network comprising:

(a) an email client for allowing the user to receive email sent on the network addressed to a unique email address of the user,

(b) an email-receiving server connected between the network and the email client for receiving email addressed to the unique email address of the user, said email-receiving server having an authorized senders list (ASL) module which maintains an ASL list of email addresses of senders authorized to send email to the user, and

(c) an email rejection module operable with the ASL module for rejecting the receipt of email addressed to the email address of the user if the email address of the sender is not one that is maintained on the ASL list by returning an error message to the sender.

2. A system according to Claim 1, wherein the ASL module includes an ASL database for storing ASL lists of authorized sender addresses for respective subscribers of the system, a spam processor module for checking the ASL lists for matches, and an ASL manager for creating, maintaining, and updating the ASL lists.

3. A system according to Claim 2, further comprising a redirector module operable with the ASL module for receiving an email-sending message designating the sender's FROM address and intended recipient's TO address, for sending a request for validation to the spam processor module to determine whether the sender's FROM address matches any authorized sender address maintained on the ASL list corresponding to the TO address of the intended recipient, for accepting the email if a match to an authorized sender address is found, and for rejecting the email if no match to an authorized sender address is found on the ASL list.

4. A system according to Claim 3, further comprising a web-based messaging (WBM) module to which email rejected by the redirector module is redirected and which sends a message to the address of the sender of the rejected email notifying the sender to confirm that the sender is a legitimate sender of email to the intended recipient.

5. A system according to Claim 4, wherein the WBM module

includes a separate web site to which the notified sender can log on and confirm that the sender is a legitimate sender of email through an interaction procedure which can only be performed by a human.

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6. A system according to Claim 5, wherein the interaction procedure includes a display of a graphic image of a word in a non-standard font, and an input for the sender to enter in a word corresponding to the graphic image of the word, whereby the system can confirm that the interaction procedure is not performed by a mechanical program.

7. A system according to Claim 4, wherein once the sender is confirmed as a legitimate sender of email to the intended recipient user, the WBM module sends the email to the user's email box with a code that indicates that the email was rejected by the redirector module but confirmed as legitimate by the WBM module.

8. A system according to Claim 3, further comprising an email-receiving manager for capturing FROM and TO addresses of email accepted by the redirector module and sending the data to the ASL manager for later analysis.

9. A system according to Claim 2, further comprising an email-sending manager for capturing FROM and TO addresses of email sent from the email client and sending the data to the ASL manager for later analysis.

10. A system according to Claim 2, wherein the ASL manager further includes a rules processor for processing predefined address capture rules for updating the ASL lists using data from an email address source selected from the group of email address sources consisting of: received email; sent email; user inputs to email service functions on the email client; inputs from user browsing of web sites; user desktop organizer and other contact lists; and third party address program inputs.

11. A system according to Claim 2, wherein the ASL manager further comprises a rules processor for processing predefined analysis rules for updating the ASL lists using data from an analysis source selected from the group of analysis sources consisting of: user email log analysis; expiration date analysis; low/high email volume analysis; fuzzy logic analysis; and third party data analysis.

12. A system according to Claim 2, wherein the ASL manager maintains the ASL lists designating a sender-address status selected from the group of sender-address statuses consisting of: always authorized as a friend; authorized as a friend over a date range; authorized as a friend before an expiration date; always rejected as a spammer; rejected as a spammer matching a black list; and rejected as a spammer sent with an error message.

13. A method for eliminating unauthorized email sent to a user on a network comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving email addressed to the unique email address of the user,

(b) maintaining an authorized senders list (ASL list) of email addresses of external users authorized to send email to the user, and

(c) rejecting the receipt of email sent to the email address of the user if the email address of the sender is not one maintained on the ASL list by returning an error message to the sender.

14. A method according to Claim 13, further comprising the step of redirecting the rejected email to a web site for sending a message to the sender of the rejected email notifying the sender to confirm that the sender is a legitimate sender of email to the intended recipient.

15. A method according to Claim 14, further comprising the step of performing an interaction procedure at the web site with the notified sender which can only be performed by a human.

16. A method according to Claim 13, wherein said ASL list maintaining step includes updating the ASL lists using data captured from any of the following sources: received email; sent email; user inputs to email service functions; inputs from user browsing of web sites; user desktop organizer and other contact lists; and third party address program inputs.

17. A method according to Claim 13, wherein said ASL list maintaining step includes updating the ASL lists using data obtained from analysis of any of the following factors: user email log analysis; expiration date analysis; low/high email volume analysis; fuzzy logic analysis; and third party data analysis.

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18. An email server system for eliminating unauthorized email sent via a network to the server addressed to a unique email address for a user of the system comprising:

(a) an authorized senders list (ASL) module which maintains an ASL list of email addresses of senders authorized to send email to the user, and

(b) an email rejection module operable with the ASL module for rejecting the receipt of email addressed to the email address of the user if the email address of the sender is not one that is maintained on the ASL list by returning an error message to the sender.

19. An email server system according to Claim 18, wherein the ASL module includes an ASL database for storing ASL lists of authorized sender addresses for respective subscribers of the system, a spam processor module for checking the ASL lists for matches, and an ASL manager for creating, maintaining, and updating the ASL lists.

20. An email server system according to Claim 19, further comprising a redirector module operable with the ASL module for receiving an email-sending message designating the sender's FROM address and intended recipient's TO address, for sending a request for validation to the spam processor module to determine whether the sender's FROM address matches any authorized sender address maintained on the ASL list corresponding to the TO address of the intended recipient, for accepting the email if a match to an authorized sender address is found, and for rejecting the email if no match to an authorized sender address is found on the ASL list.
